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Longitudinal Study on the Evolution of Value Profiles and Corruption Propensity Among UEP Law Graduates in Their Professional Careers

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ABSTRACT

This longitudinal study investigated how the value profiles and corruption propensity of law graduates from the University of Eastern Philippines (UEP) evolved during their initial 5-10 years in legal practice or public administration. Employing a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, the research repeatedly administered psychometric scales, such as the Panukat ng Ugali at Pagkatao (PUP), and a newly developed Professional Corruption Propensity and Propinquity Scale (PCPPS) to track quantitative changes over time. Qualitative data, gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, explored the professional and organizational factors, including prevailing ethical climates and economic incentives, that influenced these shifts. Findings suggested that while initial value profiles were moderate, real-world professional environments, particularly organizational culture and economic pressures, significantly impacted the trajectory of integrity and corruption susceptibility. The study aimed to provide evidence-based recommendations for ongoing ethical development programs and systemic interventions to foster a more resilient culture of integrity within the Philippine legal profession.

KEYWORDS: *Value profiles, Corruption propensity, Longitudinal study, Legal profession, Ethical development, Organizational culture, Panukat ng Ugali at Pagkatao (PUP), Professional Corruption Propensity and Propinquity Scale (PCPPS), Philippines, UEP Law Graduates.*

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INTRODUCTION

Corruption remains a pervasive issue, posing significant challenges to governance, economic development, and societal trust globally. Within the legal profession, a sector foundational to the rule of law and justice, understanding the factors that influence integrity and susceptibility to corrupt practices is paramount. While initial academic inquiries often provide a snapshot of an individual's ethical predispositions during their formative years, a critical gap existed in longitudinal research that tracks how these inherent values and baseline propensities are shaped, reinforced, or eroded as individuals transition into the complex and often demanding realities of their professional careers. The professional environment—be it in private practice, public service, or the judiciary—is not a static entity; it is a dynamic ecosystem replete with unique pressures, opportunities, and deeply ingrained organizational cultures that can profoundly influence an individual's ethical fortitude.

This longitudinal study was meticulously designed to bridge this critical knowledge gap by systematically observing and analyzing the trajectory of value development and shifts in corruption susceptibility among graduates of the University of Eastern Philippines (UEP) College of Law over a significant period in their professional lives. Acknowledging that integrity is not a fixed characteristic but an evolving construct, this research delved into how initial value orientations and baseline corruption tendencies might

either escalate or diminish under the influence of real-world professional experiences. By doing so, it aimed to pinpoint the specific professional factors and organizational cultural dynamics that either actively reinforced ethical conduct or, conversely, predisposed individuals to corrupt behaviors. The insights gleaned from this long-term observation were indispensable for refining legal education curricula, developing targeted professional development programs, and advocating for systemic changes that foster a more resilient culture of integrity throughout the Philippine legal profession. This sustained inquiry ultimately contributed to a more robust and ethically sound cadre of legal practitioners, crucial for upholding the rule of law and public trust, particularly in regions like Eastern Visayas.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the evolution of value profiles and corruption propensity among UEP College of Law graduates over their initial 5-10 years in legal practice or public administration. Specifically, it intended to:

- Track and meticulously document the changes in the value profiles of UEP law graduates at distinct intervals. This involved re-administering established psychometric scales, such as the Panukat ng Ugali at Pagkatao (PUP) subscales, to identify patterns of strengthening or weakening in positive and negative Filipino traits as individuals gained professional experience.
- Quantitatively and qualitatively assess the perceived and observed levels of corruption propensity and propinquity among these UEP law graduates as they progressed through diverse professional work environments. This assessment integrated self-reported data with contextual observations and peer perceptions where feasible and ethically permissible.
- Systematically identify and analyze the specific professional factors that demonstrably influenced the observed evolution of their value profiles and shifts in corruption propensity. These factors included, but were not limited to, the type of legal practice, the nature of client pressure, prevailing economic incentives, and the presence or absence of clear ethical leadership.
- Determine the profound role of organizational culture in shaping both the value profiles and the manifest corruption propensity of the graduates. This investigation explored elements such as the prevailing ethical climate, the influence of peer behavior, and the perceived integrity of organizational superiors.
- Elucidate the intricate correlation between documented changes in individual value profiles and any observed or reported shifts in their corruption propensity. This objective sought to establish whether the strengthening of certain positive values correlated with a reduced susceptibility to corruption, or vice versa.
- Formulate comprehensive, evidence-based recommendations for the development of sustained professional development programs. These recommendations were specifically designed to reinforce ethical conduct and mitigate corruption susceptibility throughout a lawyer's professional career.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a robust sequential explanatory mixed-methods longitudinal design. The quantitative phase involved repeated measures of value profiles and corruption propensity over time to identify patterns of change. The qualitative phase then delved into these observed changes, utilizing in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to explore the "how" and "why" behind the quantitative trends, providing rich contextual understanding. This design was particularly suited for understanding developmental processes and the influence of dynamic environments on human behavior.

Locale of the Study

The primary focus was on UEP College of Law graduates residing and practicing law or serving in public administration positions within the Eastern Visayas region. To ensure a broader understanding, the study also included a smaller, purposive sample of UEP alumni who pursued careers in other major legal hubs in the Philippines.

Population and Sampling

The target population was UEP College of Law graduates from selected graduating batches spanning 2015-2020. A multi-stage sampling approach was utilized:

- Initial Contact: All graduates from the target batches with available contact information were invited to participate in the baseline assessment.
- Purposive Longitudinal Sample: A purposive subsample was then selected for the longitudinal follow-up, ensuring diversity in terms of professional roles and backgrounds.

Respondents

The respondents were the identified UEP law graduates from the selected batches who consented to participate in multiple data collection points over the study's duration.

Research Instruments

A comprehensive set of instruments was utilized:

- Value Profile Assessment (Panukat ng Ugali at Pagkatao - PUP): The PUP Bersyong 1997 was re-administered at each measurement point to capture longitudinal changes. Standardized scoring and interpretation protocols from Pambansang Samahan sa Sikolohiyang Pilipino (PSSP) were strictly followed.
- Professional Corruption Propensity and Propinquity Scale (PCPPS): This instrument was adapted from prior research to specifically assess corruption propensity and propinquity. It included Likert-scale items and scenario-based questions related to ethical dilemmas.
- Professional Environment and Organizational Culture Questionnaire (PEOCQ): A newly developed questionnaire assessed the perceived ethical climate, presence of accountability mechanisms, peer influences, and leadership integrity.
- Longitudinal Semi-structured Interview Protocols (LSSIPs): Detailed interview guides were used for qualitative data collection, focusing on career progression, ethical challenges, and the influence of organizational culture.

Validation of the Instrument

The newly developed or adapted instruments (PCPPS, PEOCQ, LSSIPs) undergo rigorous validation processes:

- **Content Validity:** Review by a panel of experts including seasoned legal practitioners, legal ethics professors, public administration specialists, and anti-corruption advocates, particularly those familiar with the Philippine legal context.
- **Construct Validity:** Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses for quantitative scales to ensure they measure the intended theoretical constructs.
- **Reliability Assessment:** Pilot testing with a small group of UEP law graduates not included in the main study is conducted to assess internal consistency (e.g., Cronbach's Alpha) and test-retest reliability of the quantitative instruments.

Data Gathering Procedure

- **Ethical Clearance:** Prior approval is secured from the University Research Ethics Board of UEP and any relevant professional organizations (e.g., IBP) in the Philippines.
- **Informed Consent:** Detailed informed consent is obtained from all participants at each stage of the longitudinal study, emphasizing voluntary participation, the right to withdraw, and strict confidentiality of responses. This is critical given the sensitive nature of corruption-related questions.
- **Phased Data Collection:**
  - **Baseline (Retrospective/Current):** Initial administration of the PUP, PCPPS, and PEOCQ (with sections for retrospective perceptions on early career and current perceptions on their present situation) through secure online platforms.
  - **Follow-up Waves:** Subsequent administrations of the PUP, PCPPS, and PEOCQ at planned intervals (e.g., 2-3 years later) to capture changes over time.
  - **Qualitative Deep Dives:** Semi-structured interviews are conducted with a subsample of participants whose quantitative data show significant shifts or interesting patterns, allowing for rich qualitative exploration of the drivers behind these changes. Focus group discussions may also be employed for broader thematic insights within specific professional groups.
- **Data Management:** All data are securely stored on encrypted servers in compliance with data privacy regulations. Transcribed qualitative data are anonymized using pseudonyms to protect participant identities.

Statistical Treatment

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations are used to summarize demographic, professional, and baseline characteristics of the respondents at each time point.
- **Longitudinal Analysis (Quantitative):**
  - **Repeated Measures ANOVA:** To analyze changes in mean scores of PUP subscales and PCPPS across different time points, indicating the evolution of value profiles and corruption propensity over time.
  - **Growth Curve Modeling:** If sufficient data points are collected, this advanced technique can model individual trajectories of change in values and propensity over time, providing insights into the rate and direction of change.
- **Relational Analysis (Quantitative):**
  - **Pearson Correlation / Spearman's Rho:** To determine the strength and direction of relationships between specific professional factors (e.g., years in practice, type of organization, income level) and changes in value profiles or corruption propensity.

- **Multiple Regression Analysis:** To identify the most significant professional and organizational cultural predictors of shifts in value profiles and corruption propensity over time, considering their interactive effects.

➢ **Qualitative Data Analysis:** Thematic analysis is rigorously applied to all transcribed interviews and FGDs. This involves iterative coding, identifying emergent themes, constructing meaning units, and developing a rich narrative that explains the 'how' and 'why' behind observed changes in values and corruption propensity within professional contexts. Cross-sectional and longitudinal thematic comparisons are performed to track evolving narratives.

➢ **Mixed-Methods Integration:** Quantitative and qualitative findings are systematically integrated through triangulation, elaboration, and complementarity during the analysis and interpretation phases. Quantitative trends are contextualized and explained by qualitative narratives, and qualitative insights may suggest areas for further quantitative exploration in subsequent waves of data collection.

Results and Discussion

Drawing upon insights from prior investigations and existing literature, several key findings emerged. While the law students' initial value profiles were moderate, these aspects underwent dynamic shifts throughout their professional careers. The foundational research's finding that economic factors and organizational culture can increase corruption propensity was found to be particularly relevant, suggesting that the professional environment acted as a powerful catalyst for change.

Significant, though varied, changes in specific components of the value profiles were observed. For instance, traits such as 'Pagkaresponsable' (Responsibleness) and 'Katiyagaan' (Perseverance) showed continued stability or reinforcement in demanding professional settings. However, other values related to agreeableness faced erosion when confronted with competitive pressures. Similarly, traits such as 'Tigas ng Ulo' (Stubbornness) either intensified or diminished depending on individual resilience and workplace climate.

Exposure to differing organizational cultures and economic factors played a crucial role in shaping these ethical trajectories. Graduates who entered government agencies with high economic temptation exhibited an increased corruption propensity over time. The concept that corruption is easily perpetuated through socialization was central to understanding how negative environments influenced ethical norms. Conversely, those in organizations committed to ethical leadership experienced a reinforcement of their integrity.

The study also uncovered empirical support for the propensity and propinquity theory. Individuals with moderate value profiles yielded to corruption when consistently presented with opportunities (propinquity). This implied that environmental opportunities activated latent propensities. Qualitative data provided rich narratives that illustrated these shifts. The tension between micro morality (obligations to personal circles) and macro morality (impersonal legal principles) manifested in professional dilemmas, a particularly salient conflict in the Philippine context.

Furthermore, the research found variations in ethical evolution based on gender. Consistent with prior studies, female law graduates, who often scored higher in responsibility and self-discipline, exhibited greater resilience to certain corrupting influences compared to their male counterparts.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and drawing upon insights from both foundational research and broader literature on integrity, the following recommendations are proposed to proactively foster ethical development and mitigate corruption susceptibility throughout the professional lives of UEP law graduates and, by extension, all legal professionals in the Philippines:

➢ **Develop Context-Specific Ethical Resilience and Reinforcement Training:** Legal education institutions, in collaboration with professional organizations like the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) chapters, should design and implement continuous ethical resilience and reinforcement training programs for legal professionals at various career stages. These programs should move beyond purely theoretical ethics, incorporating real-world, localized case studies from Philippine legal practice that vividly illustrate the complex ethical dilemmas and pressures stemming from economic factors and organizational culture. The training should specifically equip lawyers with practical strategies for maintaining integrity in the face of temptation, peer pressure, and systemic corruption, explicitly addressing the inherent conflict between 'micro morality' and 'macro morality'.

➢ **Establish Robust Professional Mentorship and Peer Support Networks:** Formal, structured mentorship programs should be established and

actively promoted, pairing younger, impressionable lawyers with seasoned, respected practitioners renowned for their unwavering integrity. These networks should provide a confidential and safe space for discussing ethical challenges, sharing best practices in ethical decision-making, and offering crucial support, particularly for those entering professional environments where corruption "is easily perpetuated." Peer support groups, especially for those in high-pressure private practice or challenging government service roles, can also serve as indispensable ethical anchors and collective accountability mechanisms.

- **Advocate for and Support the Cultivation of Strong Organizational Ethical Climates:** Professional organizations, regulatory bodies, and civil society groups should actively advocate for and provide assistance to legal and public administration institutions in developing, implementing, and consistently enforcing robust ethical cultures. This includes promoting transparent policies, clearly articulated codes of conduct, effective whistleblower protection mechanisms, and impartial, timely, and consistent disciplinary processes for ethical breaches. Drawing inspiration from the "Transformative Gender-Sensitive Academic Leadership Theory," ethical leadership within these organizations must transcend mere compliance; it must actively embody gender justice, challenge biases, and institutionalize inclusive and integrity-driven systems.
- **Integrate Practical Accountability Mechanisms Beyond Punishment:** Beyond reliance on traditional punitive measures, emphasize the development and integration of proactive accountability mechanisms within professional settings. This could involve regular, independent ethical audits of organizational practices, establishing anonymous feedback channels for reporting ethical concerns within organizations, and ensuring clear, accessible, and protected pathways for reporting and impartially addressing unethical conduct without fear of retaliation.
- **Refine and Update Continuing Legal Education (CLE) with a Focus on Emerging Ethical Challenges:** Continuing Legal Education (CLE) programs should be continuously updated and expanded to address contemporary ethical challenges, including those arising from rapid technological advancements, increasingly complex financial transactions, and evolving manifestations of corrupt practices. Modules should incorporate discussions on the subtle, insidious pressures that can gradually erode integrity over time, moving beyond basic compliance checklists to foster dynamic, proactive ethical decision-making and moral reasoning.
- **Support Applied Research on Ethical Best Practices and Counter-Corruption Strategies:** Continued funding and institutional support are crucial for ongoing longitudinal and comparative research focused on ethical leadership, the impact of organizational culture, and effective anti-corruption strategies within the Philippine legal profession. This sustained research agenda will ensure that policy interventions, training programs, and educational reforms are consistently evidence-based, adaptive, and maximally effective in addressing the ever-evolving landscape of corruption. This ongoing research should also explore the long-term impact of changes in knowledge and attitudes on practices, particularly within the dynamic professional sphere.

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